Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments
FY 2010 Information Sheet

Caitlin Simpson
May 2009

The Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments (RISA) program supports integrated, place-based research across a range of social, natural, and physical science disciplines as well as ongoing, innovative outreach activities to expand decision-makers' options in the face of climate change and variability at local and regional scales. RISA teams work directly with people who are involved with activities, resources, or property that may be vulnerable to climate variability and change, enhancing their capacity to use climate information and related decision support resources.

RISA Objectives

- Work with communities, resource managers, planners and end-users, such as local, state, and federal agencies, agricultural extension specialists, Native American communities and public utility companies to help them prepare for and adapt to a changing and variable climate.
- Create partnerships among regional institutions, engaging stakeholders to collaboratively assess climate-sensitive issues in the region.
- Coordinate, conduct, and evaluate integrated natural and social science research relevant to identified issues and socio-economic needs.
- Integrate interdisciplinary knowledge and experience into the design and support of effective response to climate variability and change.
- Collaborate with regional institutions to bring climate predictions, projections and information about climate impacts to decision makers.
- Work with operational or quasi-operational entities (government agencies, extension networks, private sector) to transition RISA models and tools for long-term sustainability.

RISA Approaches

RISA teams are comprised of researchers from the physical, natural, engineering and social sciences who work together and partner with stakeholders in a region to determine how climate affects key resources and how climate information could aid in decision making and planning for those stakeholders. More recently, these teams have begun to work with stakeholders to explore adaptation options in the face of a varying and changing climate.

RISA possesses three distinct qualities: (1) fostering interdisciplinary research and assessment synthesis; (2) improving our understanding of and bridging the gap among climatic, environmental and societal interactions on different temporal and spatial scales; and (3) contributing to regional decision support and climate information service. A successful RISA program requires innovative and embedded long-term partnerships among a spectrum of interested parties including Federal, State, Native, regional, local

and private entities.

The stakeholder interactions happen on an ongoing basis and should be used to inform the evolution of RISA research, tool development/enhancement and further work with resource managers and planners. Thus, RISA teams often include program managers, outreach specialists, and other staff who work on team integration and management, connecting stakeholder needs with the direction of the research agendas, training activities, outreach efforts, and the development of white papers, newsletters, and other documents for stakeholders.

RISA teams are funded through cooperative agreements with NOAA. Thus, teams are expected to participate in periodic RISA network meetings and conference calls, NOAA climate services meetings, and NIDIS meetings, where appropriate. In addition, teams are expected to respond to periodic requests for information regarding topics relevant to their project or recent research they are conducting. In the proposal, staff time should be allocated for this type of work.

Topics covered by individual RISAs depend on the regional needs of decision makers and pressing climate-sensitive issues for the region. The RISA program as a whole has supported research and stakeholder work on climate-sensitive resources such as fisheries, water, wildfire, agriculture, public health, transportation and coastal zones. Projects build on the achievements of integrated climate-society research and assessments to advance understanding of potential climate impacts in their regions. They also evaluate the impact of their efforts on regional and local stakeholders, policy and planning processes, and resource management.

FY2010 Priorities

For FY 2010, the RISA program is soliciting proposals to fund one RISA team per region in up to 6 regions of the U.S. Several existing RISA regions (e.g., western U.S., Pacific Islands, and southeastern U.S.) are considered part of this competition. Proposals from the following regions ***will not*** be considered (the RISAs in these regions are not up for re-competition AT THIS TIME):

a. Alaska/Arctic;

b. Carolinas;

c. Southern Plains (i.e., Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi)

d. Desert Southwest (Arizona and New Mexico)

A region is defined as 2 or more adjacent states, a state plus adjacent islands, or a basin that crosses more than one state. Proposed RISAs can be up to ***5 years*** in duration. RISAs will be recompeted every five years.

*** Only one proposal (including subcontracts) per proposed RISA will be accepted for review.

RISA proposals should include a strong emphasis on climate *change* impacts and adaptation issues but should also include issues of climate variability (past, present, and future) to inform resource management and planning. Proposed projects should build on progress already achieved by integrated climate-society research and assessments projects in the proposed region in terms of working with stakeholders and advancing regional climate impacts science.

The proposal should address how the team intends to include social and physical science research on the impacts of climate variability and change on the social, ecological, and/or economic systems of the region. Research on evaluating the impact of the RISA on regional and local stakeholders, policy and planning processes, and resource management as the RISA evolves is also important.

Place-based research is a key component of the RISA research methodology. NOAA encourages prospective proposals to include partners from the region. Applicants are encouraged to plan for multi-institutional partnerships, where appropriate, over the five-year period. Research teams need not be from only one institution. Partners could include other universities, NGOs, U.S. federal agencies, state and local agencies (including state climatologists), native or tribal organizations, and the private sector. Many federal agencies with resource management responsibilities (e.g., DOI/FWS, USGS, NPS, BOR, BLM; USDA/FS, NRCS, extension; EPA, USACE) are interested in partnering with RISAs to advance climate change impacts research, training, and tool development. RISAs are encouraged to partner with these agencies where appropriate. We are also interested in how your proposed RISA can link with currently underserved communities in the region.

Where appropriate, applicants should also show how your research and prototype tools and services could potentially contribute to emerging NOAA Climate Services in the region. (See sources listed under background information below.) Proposed linkages to NOAA (e.g., Sea Grant, Coastal Services Center, NWS local and regional offices, Climate Prediction Center, NOAA labs and data centers), NOAA-supported institutions, such as the Regional Climate Centers (RCCs), state climatologists and/or other climate information providers for the region, should be addressed in the proposal.

NOAA hopes to accelerate decision support research and transition experimental tools into resource management and public and private sector planning. Proposed tool development should include an explicit statement about potential end-users and a RISA strategy for eventual transition of the tool to an operational or quasi-operational entity (e.g., local, state or federal agencies, extension networks, or the private sector). NOAA's Transition of Research Applications to Climate Services (TRACS) Program (http://www.cpo.noaa.gov/cpo_pa/nctp/) is one program designed to foster this transition.

For proposals that include a focus area on drought, the proposal should speak to connections with the emerging National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS) being developed by NOAA. For these proposals, RISAs are encouraged to engage the preparedness communities (e.g., watershed, state or county entities, regional entites, federal agencies) in developing drought-related indicators and risk management triggers for preparedness and response. Information about NIDIS can be found at http://www.drought.gov/portal/server.pt.

Integration and management of the team and its various components are critical to the success of a RISA. A core office with a part-time or full-time program manager or a strong executive committee is advised. The core office serves an important role in developing mechanisms for and ensuring the integration of research elements and ensuring the role of stakeholder activities in influencing the direction of the research. The latter is of paramount importance for ensuring a successful RISA. Plans for engaging the stakeholder community should be clearly spelled out, and the core office could play a significant role here as well. A component of flexible funding could be beneficial so that the RISA can respond to stakeholder needs and undertake short-term (1-2 year) research and outreach activities in response to those needs as the RISA evolves during the five-year period.

As mentioned previously, RISAs are implemented as cooperative agreements with NOAA and thus some amount of regular interaction between the RISA team and NOAA is expected. NOAA is particularly interested in what the NOAA Climate Program as a whole can learn from the RISAs in terms of stakeholder feedback to help guide observations and research planning, NOAA forecasts, projections and downscaling efforts, and NOAA Climate Services as a whole.

Funding

The average NOAA funding for a RISA team is expected to be in the range of $600-700K/year depending on the availability of funds. We expect teams to demonstrate high existing or potential leveraging of university, federal, state, and/or local funding.

Process

Interested applicants are highly encouraged to submit a 2-page Letter of Intent (LOI) outlining plans for a RISA by June 12, 2009 to Zachary.Zhao@noaa.gov.

NOAA will conduct a peer review process to select the best, integrated science, assessment, and outreach effort for a given region. Site visits may be included as part of the peer review process. Proposals being offered funding from the fiscal year 2010 review process will be announced as soon as they have been vetted through the grant awarding process (summer 2010).

Discussion questions that often arise during the proposal review panel process have included following:

- Is there a plan for engaging stakeholders and addressing their needs?

- Will the science be influenced by stakeholder engagement? Is there a plan for this? Does the team have experience in engaging stakeholders in a collaborative fashion?
- Will the research address important resource management and public policy issues?
- How effectively will the proposed effort address climate impacts science for the region? Does the team have the expertise needed? Have they advanced this area in the past?
- For instance, does the team have the necessary social (e.g., economic, political, anthropological, etc.) and physical (e.g., atmospheric, oceanographic, etc.) sciences expertise?
- In particular, is the team proposing to address the socio-economic dimensions of climate and drought impacts in the region? Do they have the expertise to address these issues?
- Does the proposal contain a plan for integration of the science? Does the team have experience in integrated research necessary for addressing regional climate impacts?
- Is there a plan for managing the integration of the team?
- Will the team link with broader climate services efforts in the region, such as National Weather Service climate services, Regional Climate Center, state climatologists and other state or federal agency efforts (e.g., USDA, Department of Interior, etc.)?
- Does the team have a plan for assessing their performance (e.g., standards measures, internal reviews) and expressing/addressing successes and challenges?

Background Information on the current RISA program and teams:

1. General information on the RISA program and links to current RISA team web sites can be found on the main website for this program. (http://www.climate.noaa.gov/cpo_pa/risa)
2. Information about how to submit a proposal in prior years can be found at: http://www.climate.noaa.gov/opportunities/. See Climate Program Announcement for details. The FY2010 Program Announcement is expected to be posted in early July.
3. Other relevant resources:
    1. Regional Climate Centers: http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/regionalclimatecenters.html
    2. NWS Climate Services: http://www.nws.noaa.gov/organization.php#hq;
    3. State Climatologists http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/climate/aasc.html
    4. U.S. Climate Change Science Program (CCSP) Strategic Plan (http://www.climatescience.gov/Library/stratplan2003/final/default.htm)
    5. Sector Applications Research Program (SARP) (http://www.climate.noaa.gov/cpo_pa/sarp)

Contact information:

For information about how to submit a proposal (see #2 above), page limitations or questions about the application forms, please contact Rikita Jarrett at

rikita.jarrett@noaa.gov, 301-734-1228. For questions about the goals and objectives of the RISA program, contact Caitlin Simpson (Caitlin.simpson@noaa.gov, 301-734-1251).

In order to answer questions in a timely manner and share information about the RISA program, program management will hold two teleconference calls.

1. The first call will be held on May 21, 1:30-3 pm. Eastern time; call-in information: 866-710-6541, participant code: 5841149.
2. The second call will be held on May 29, 2-3:15 pm. Eastern time; call-in information: 866-710-6541, participant code: 5841149.